11: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1964
FA28 Mossi FA28

all year round. The Red and White Voltas are important only as drainage systems during the short rainy period, for they dwindle to a string of small stagnant pools in the dry season. In some low-lying areas near the main watercourses, trapped waters provide the moisture for dank riverine vegetation.

The soils of Mossi country, which are typical of the Sudanic and Sahel areas, were formed chiefly by the weathering of Pre-Cambrian rocks. Ferruginous soils of varying depths, red argils, and pure silicates of aluminum predominate in the northern regions. In the south are found thin, sandy soils formed by the decomposition of crystalline rocks and sandstones. Most of these soils are eroded by torrential rains, the scouring action of the harmattan, and the incendiary action of man and nature. Even where the soils are reasonably fertile, the nature of the underlying rocks precludes important deposits of ground water. In the western sandstone region, rain filters down with such rapidity that water can be obtained only from deep wells. In the remainder of the territory, the presence of Pre-Cambrian rocks induces a rapid runoff, with the result that wells yield very little water at any depth. Rainfall collects only in river-bed pools or along dams constructed for that purpose in hollow places. The building of dams was relatively unknown in aboriginal times, and the Mossi did not practice irrigation farming.

During the dry season, Mossi country presents a picture of such utter aridity that one wonders whether it is possible for such parched red soils to produce plant life. After the first drops of rain, however, the entire plain quickly becomes covered with grasses that sometimes reach heights of five or six feet. The most characteristic and valuable trees in the region are the baobab (*Adansonia digitata*), the locust-bean (*Parkia biglobosa*), the shea butter (*Butyrospermum parkii*), the tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*), and the kapok (*Bombax costatum*). The sole and unimportant representative of the palm family is the *Borassus aethiopium*. There are several kinds of acacias, including the *Kenyaya senegalensis*, and a wide variety of silk-cotton trees, the most important of which is *Eryodendron anfractuosum*.

The cultivated plants of the region include numerous varieties of cereals, roots, and legumes. Several varieties of sorghum (*Sorghum vulgare*) and millet (*Pennisetum typhoides*) constitute the staple crops of the Mossi, but maize (*Zea mays*) is extremely important because it is one of the first crops to be harvested after the difficult hungry period. Peanuts, onions, rice, beans, okra, fonio, and sweet potatoes form the bulk of the other cultivated crops. Manioc is grown only in small quantities because it requires moist soil for optimum development. The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
FA28 Mossi FA28

133 Red and White Voltas are merely a series of small stagnant pools during the dry season. In some low-lying areas around the main water courses, trapped water provides the moisture for dank riverine vegetation.

● 134 The soils of Mossi country are mainly ferruginous with red argils and pure silicates of aluminum predominating in the northern region. The soils in the south are thin, sandy, and formed from the decom-
137 position of crystalline rocks and sandstones. During the dry season the Mossi landscape appears too sterile to produce plant life, but with the first drops of rain the entire country soon becomes covered with the grasses and shrubs which are characteristic of this Sudanese region. The uncultivated but valuable trees of this area include the Baobab *(Adansonia digitata)*, the locust bean *(Parkia biglobosa)*, the shea-butter *(Butyrospermum parkii)*, the tamarind *(Tamarindus*
241 *indica)* and the kapok *(Bombax costatum)*. The plants which the Mossi cultivate include varieties of cereals, roots and legumes. Sorghums *(Sorghum vulgare)* and millets *(Pennisetum typhoides)* are their staples, with maize *(Zea mays)* filling the role of a secondary but rather useful crop because its growing cycle is shorter than that of other important crops and it breaks the "hungry period." Maize would be a more important crop to the Mossi if it could grow on soil less fertile than what is normally available around the Mossi compound—the area where it brings the greatest yield. Peanuts, onions,
249 rice, beans, okra, peas and sweet potatoes are other food crops. To-
248 bacco is grown for local consumption, but the crops which have the greatest export value are cotton and indigo, used for making cloth and dyeing it.

224 The wild fauna of the country does not provide a major part of the
262 food needs of the Mossi people. The several species of deer and antelope, monkeys, rabbits and wild pig are hunted and used for food.
136 But the elephants and lions which are also found in the country are sources of great distress to the people because the former decimate the growing crops and the latter attack and kill the grazing animals.

231 The Mossi rear two main types of cattle: a zebu-like one in the north-
[234] ern regions and a small dwarf variety in the south. These animals are kept primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed
231 for meat until they are very old. The animals which provide the
262 Mossi with meat are goats, sheep, chickens and guinea fowls. Pig-
[177] raising is not widespread and seems to be declining in importance with the increasing observance of Islamic food taboos, even among
262 people who are still pagan. Fish forms only a minor part of the Mossi
467 diet and is obtained mainly from traders rather than from local activ-
231 ities. The Mossi also rear donkeys and horses for which they have